



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

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With a Boost from Feed the Future, Malawi's Seed Market Starts to Flourish



USAID

Feed the Future is helping get improved, drought-tolerant seed varieties like CAP9001 into the hands of smallholder farmers. A little friendly competition goes a long way when it comes to seed production in southern Africa.

Research into improved seed varieties, especially drought-tolerant ones, is vital for improving food security in this region, but without strong commercial distribution channels, seed companies face a disincentive to ramp up production of improved varieties. Although "CAP9001," a variety developed specifically with the needs of this region in mind, has been approved by the Drought Tolerant Maize for Africa Initiative (DTMA) of the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), the lack of multiplication and commercial distribution has been a major obstacle to getting seed to farmers.

To help lower these barriers to the market, the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID's) Southern Africa Trade Hub provided a grant of \$100,000 under the Feed the Future initiative to Capstone Seeds SA to accelerate commercial access to drought-tolerant, hybrid maize seed in Malawi. Capstone, an independent South African seed company, entered into a joint venture with Peacock Enterprises Ltd of Malawi to multiply and market CAP9001 - which maximizes yield potential in small-scale, rain-fed, drought-vulnerable farming systems - in Malawi. Through the grant, Peacock Seeds purchased parent seed and received technical assistance in best practices for seed production operations.

Pairing these two independent seed companies in South Africa and Malawi helped bring new seed products to the market effectively: approximately 80 metric tons of certified, hybrid seed maize were produced as a result of the grant project. Both parties stress the importance of a strong, local seed industry to bring competition and varied products to the market.

"It is very important that this grant supports two independent seed companies," Capstone Seed Director Philip Taylor says. "Real competition and innovation will only come from stronger local seed producers, and a more competitive seed market ultimately benefits the farmers of Malawi."

Peacock Seeds marketed the seed directly to smallholders in 10-kilogram packs, targeting approximately 8,000 farmers in the first year. But the first year is just the start.

"This partnership means that the variety will now be consistently available to the farming community," says Director of Peacock Enterprises Felix Jumbo. "We hope to increase our outreach through our dealer network which currently numbers 15. Demand is increasing, and we are confident that small-scale farmers will achieve the yield potential for our variety. Now working with a credible seed company from South Africa and distributing certified seed on the market, Peacock is happy to

be part of Malawi's agricultural development."